

To the Board of Directors of Zen Studies Society and Kosho Timothy Hayes concerning the practice at Dai Bosatsu Zendo and the leadership and teaching of Shinge Roshi:

My name is Myoho Brenda Miller, resident and the current gardener and groundskeeper at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Everything I say here is me speaking only for myself. I don't have much time for the internet here, mostly just checking the weather forecast and reading my email, but I was disturbed when directed to some things written about us, our practice here and, especially, our abbot and teacher, Shinge Roshi.

My practice here began with a Shin-nen Nancy Berg workshop in 1997. Then attending sesshin and coming for work exchange as a student of Eido Roshi. After Rohatsu Sesshin 2005, I did not return until Rohatsu sesshin 2012 when I became a student of Shinge Roshi and received jukai with her in April 2013. For 3 years now, I have been a close student—not just a coming sometimes to sesshin student but a daily, engaged student of Shinge Roshi. And have been at DBZ for most of the last 2 years. Last winter I was one of only two people here for the duration.

This year Rohatsu Sesshin was the strongest sesshin in which I have ever participated. Shinge Roshi showed us her guts, held back nothing in her teishos. Same with those giving Dharma talks. Honest human beings engaged in and encouraging us to 'cut off our lives at the root'.

I spoke out at the informal meal afterwards because I was so moved by the strength, the courage, the compassion, the fair-mindedness of Shinge Roshi. To become abbot of this place at a time of such turmoil, when the entire sangha seemed to be running away—some because Eido Roshi was gone and some because he hadn't been sent away sooner—has to be the hardest job on planet earth. Worse even than being president of the United States! I can't imagine why she would even want it with such a wonderful home in Syracuse and a thriving temple and sangha at Hoen-ji. Why would she throw herself into this bottomless pit of lawsuits and venomous web postings constantly attacking her, attacking us?

Timothy Hayes says it is "concern about her own supposed advancement." I asked her once why, seeing her literally put her health and her life on the line for this place, for her students, over and over. She answered, "Love".

If I were asked what zen does my teacher teach, I would say she teaches the zen of the 3rd ancestor, Sosan Kanchi who in 'Faith in Mind' says: "The Perfect Way is not difficult; just avoid getting caught up in preferences. When you are free from aversion and craving, It reveals itself fully and without disguise. A tenth of an inch's difference, and heaven and earth are set apart." She also frequently quotes Pope Francis: "Who am I to judge?". She urges patience in dealing with "others", always saying that they are, "becoming the Buddha's that they are".

I attended the November 21st meeting in NYC, called for by Eido Roshi even though we had a full house for "Intro to Zen" that weekend because I didn't want to miss witnessing someone truly making amends for harms done. Instead, Eido Roshi threw Shinge Roshi under the bus within the first moments of the meeting. He named her as one of his victims. No one else has been called out by name. If any other female student who had been 'manipulated for [Eido Roshi's] own gratification' had been called out by name, there would have been outrage towards him and full kindness and support and apologies for the 'outed' woman.

But because it was Shinge Roshi who had undergone years of being beligerently badgered by others with this question, and through her own discernment had held fast, suddenly, people like Timothy Hayes are calling for her to be dismissed.

I wish all of you could have heard her teisho on the third day of Rohatsu sesshin. Her comments on Case #41 of The Iron Flute were powerful. She recited the poem that Tozan Ryokai composed after his enlightenment. And then, she showed us her tonsils. She told her story. Her struggle with the koan, the question, 'Did you have have sex with Eido Roshi'. She told us the story of that night. What it meant to her to hear him say, "Don't ever tell anyone...".

Polluted? This is the teaching that is polluting us??

Here at DBZ this has been a year of "the best evers...". People said it was the "best o-bon ever", "the best family weekend", " the best Thanksgiving ever", "most powerful Rohatsu sesshin" a wedding for 108 people that brough enormous joy to everyone in attendance. Several interments of ashes where whole families came and stayed over and were so grateful for the vibrant community and support they found here.

Countless retreats held by countless groups. Full houses of samu volunteers and program participants weekend after weekend, many returning after years of being away. People come here and find refuge, find solid zen practice, find a place of strength and peace in which to dive into This more deeply.

The fact that Dai Bosatsu Zendo and Zen Studies Society even still exists after all that has happened is a miracle. Even more amazing and wonderful is that, right here, right now, our practice is far from 'polluted'. Our momentum over the past few years has been breath-taking.

I urge any of you out there who have formed an opinion about what our practice is like here at DBZ under the guidance of Shinge Roshi to come for a weekend, or sesshin, or kessei. I promise you won't find pollution or even sloppiness. What you will find are dedicated students working hard everyday to walk this walk, to incorporate the forms and traditions handed down to us into our daily practice. If you come on the 21st of the month, we will be celebrating Dai Bosatsu Mandala Day; the 4th and we will be celebrating DBZ Day. Starting this month, if you come on the full moon, we will be having a confession and atonement ceremony based on very old, traditional, monastic forms.

We are led by a true zen master. A woman who has dedicated her entire life to the Dharma. A woman who no one would have faulted if she had chosen to walk away, "retire", years ago but hasn't. A woman who can hold gratitude towards her own teacher for his service to the Dharma while also recognizing the enormous harm caused by the same human being. And now, we know that all this time, she has also been holding this impossible koan of that night in May of 1975.

This is enough out of this old gardener! Time to check the weather forecast and get back to work. Hope you will do the same.

Gassho-
Myoho Brenda Miller